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## THE BUILDER,

NO. XXX.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1843.

### FIRE-PROOF BUILDINGS.

We care not if the under-current of a powerful movement which is now setting in be acknowledged as put in motion by ourselves, or be attributed to and claimed by the straws which float upon the surface; but we are glad to learn that after all we have said, and after the stern and oft-repeated monitions of dear experience, a *movement* is being made towards a change of system on the part of the Fire-offices—a wiser system—that of foresight and prevention is about to take place of the haphazard and foolish reliance on a power to cure or to suppress, and presently we shall as soon expect to hear men advertising their fire insurance policy as a ground of security, as to find men of that genus of the Irishman in the storm, who, while his fellow-passengers and the crew were in terror and apprehension of instant loss, sat full at ease and replied, "Faix, now, and why should I be concerned? didn't I insure my life before starting on the voyage?" No man, and no body of men, will consider themselves secure upon any such ground, or upon any thing less than having taken precautionary measures of another class, and we do not despair of seeing our proposition for fire-proof structures, fire-proof blocks of buildings, but above all, the grand aqueduct, seriously thought of first, and then carried out. We learn that a half-silent movement is being made in the way of bringing public attention to the subject, and convening a suitable meeting through the City and other authorities. This is as it should be in the main, and shall have our best attention and aid; but we may venture to offer a word of advice not to be thrown away or lightly heeded—"Steer clear of petty jealousies, envious ambitions, and private jobs."

We do not conceal, and it would be contrary to our nature to attempt to conceal, that we are to a great degree satisfied in the receipt of the letter of the Rev. Vicar of Leamington, which appears in another part of our paper. It is complimentary to ourselves, but it is more valuable, and infinitely more honourable to the reverend vicar, that he should recognize in the frank and manly manner in which he has done, his responsibility to the architectural public for any supposed or imputed breach of just dealing to it through one of its body. The liberal and art-loving spirit which has impelled him to great efforts for the re-edification and enlargement of his church, could scarcely exist without thus much of amenity in the defence of his conduct, or without this fine sense of accountability to a tribunal of proper jurisdiction, and where the forms of arraignment had been fairly set forth. Our first notice of the church in which the rev. vicar is engaged, referred to the fact of the works as viewed then in progress; the next step was setting forth the substance of a letter from Mr. Jackson, the architect, who had been superseded, as stated by us, in the direction of the works; wherein a case appeared to be

made out requiring explanation. We were determined not to prejudice; and now we have the other side of the question. In such explanations as these it is hardly possible to avoid, by a statement of pure fact, the mention of things of such a nature or in such a way, as to produce irritation in the minds of even the least perturbed; and we are afraid that in this instance the reverend vicar may have, in his own justification, stated so much and in such a way, as to tend to such a result with Mr. Jackson; but we conjure both parties, and especially the reverend gentleman, who will excuse our seeming boldness, while we have a profound deference for his better knowledge of duty—we conjure both to adhere to the most scrupulous resolutions of pacific purpose.

We shall not attempt to anticipate Mr. Jackson's reply, we only hope it may be in the spirit we so much affect.

While we are upon a subject in which mention has been made of the Cambridge Camden Society, we may take occasion to allude to a matter personal to ourselves. In the last number of the *Ecclesiologist*, and an interesting one it is, a promise is made to deal with some "unsound and mischievous principles" alleged to have been propounded by us. We are far from deprecating any thing like a free and fair criticism upon the course we are pursuing, or the opinions we hold; and if our principles are really in fault, we shall be thankful to the hand that chastises; but we are not so hypocritical or so filled with affectation as to assume ignorance of what is meant. We shrink from no acrimony, while, on the other hand, we invade no sanctuary; and the scrutiny we invite will be to reveal that we are not without some pretensions to have our say, to propound and to maintain our opinions. We wish not to invade the sanctuary of the Camden or any other society for the sake of testing the weight of opinion emanating from thence. Independent, therefore, of personal matters, and assuming the name of our respective organs to be a fair exterior index of qualification for combat, if combatants we must be, we hold at the outset that *THE BUILDER* has at least as fair ground as the *Ecclesiologist* for privileged opinion in matters of building art. This is not much, to be sure, and we do not put it forward as an argument, but taken in its full significance it may have the force of one. We are fully alive to the value and importance of the labours of the Camden Schools of Ecclesiologists.—Stimulated from without, or it may be more correct to say from within, for the clergy have been once, and may be again, the leaders and arbiters in matters of art; so stimulated, we say, and so encouraged and guided, the professors of Architecture may be found forward in proficiency, where otherwise complaints as to shallowness and empiricism might lie. But we opine that much has to be conceded, or rather acquired, on both sides; *PRINCIPLES* are the things at issue, and right glad we are that it is upon these rather than upon any fanciful and immaterial accidents that some friend has stumbled, and so reported us to the Cambridge Camden Society, or its editors—*PRINCIPLES* of design involving all the questions of propriety in adaptation, in structure, in choice of materials, in forms and essentials—these are what we are in quest of—gladdened with somewhat of glimpses (we boast no more), and humbly intent on pursuing. In this progress we find ourselves associate with ardent, zealous, and indefatigable spirits—chief of which, and chiefs among, are the Camden Societies. We see them active in culling flowers, or picking up

gems from the fields in which their vocation has charged them to labour. We witness with gladdest feeling, and participate in their delight. We echo every boast of their discovery—we cry repeats to all their assertions of right, and remonstrances against wrong—and suffer or grieve only when the clamour of the less enlightened of the party—the mere *camp-followers*, raise a cry of war—or when their run-ahead propensities appear more dangerous to the cause of general success than the incursions of the savage, the barbarous, and the uncivilized. In arts there are but few leaders; indeed it is in this, the highest of empires, that the generalissimo obtains and commands place, more than in great campaigns of war and conquest. Art, long sunk in a night of inaction, following the spent-out efforts of her day of great achievements, wakes up slowly to renew her labours and assert her supremacy; the recollection of past efforts is excited, but a world of new circumstances and new agents have been born to her in her sleep; she draws from her armoury or storehouse her once well-trusted weapons and machinery, and essays a renewal of their workings; but if we examine, the most that they claim of attention or admiration is based on reminiscences, a little to fashion, and this with the multitude, while a few only of the profound and far-seeing observe in them the functions of precious depositaries of eternal principles of fitness, beauty, and design, and as such venerate and esteem them in a spirit far apart from the profanity of the thoughtless or the frivolity of the uninspired.

A ripper age than this produced but one Wykeham, but now we have many, or many who aspiring to be commentators and interpreters of his spirit, discharge the trust in the spirit of such functionaries. Wykeham spoke to his times in a burning language—in words of living and active intelligencies—let us in this imitate him; but who hut a Wykeham shall emulate a Wykeham?—and these are not made in the machinery of schools, but born under stars and in times of God's appointment.

*PRINCIPLES*, indeed, say we. Sit we down with special zest to the discussion and digestion of a feast of principles, and whether with the Camden or any other, the patrons and espousers of Archaeology, break our bread and share our salt; but—spare the grace that pervenes the feast with the stigmas of "unsound and mischievous."

### BUILDERS' AGENCY.

A CORRESPONDENT, under the signature of "Yorick," is impatient as to progress in this matter; so are we, but our impatience, unlike his, must cope with and remove the obstacles. His suggestions of several weeks back were neither idly laid aside, nor did they fall upon our minds vacant of such thoughts and plans for months and months before. We have to the best of our power kept a registry of situations and applicants for situations in the building crafts; and, as we have announced before, have had the satisfaction of assisting many; but we were aware from the first thought of the matter entering our minds, that this business would become too extensive and important for any but a special and systematic dealing and treatment. We knew that our stepping forth in the capacity of caterers for our class, would result in the erection of one of the most important structures of commercial and trading enterprise which these times have been destined to produce. We knew that a class of half a